

# Parks, Recreation and Open Space

*The City's diverse network of public parks and open lands are a viable resource benefiting human health, the traditional wooded residential character of the community, and the natural environment.*

Parks and open space are commonly associated with fresh air, sun light and good health. The existence of these open spaces, both developed for recreation and undeveloped natural areas, have numerous environmental and community benefits, including preserving natural green space for active and passive enjoyment, creating a sense of community, supporting pedestrian movement and benefits to storm water management. Past losses of open space lands in the City of Fairfax have led to a heightened sensitivity to the need for open space throughout the community.

Over the past two hundred years, most of the pastoral open lands that now comprise the City of Fairfax have been developed for residential, commercial or other urban uses. During that same time, the importance of open space to the people of Fairfax has increased as open space lands became less common. With increasing demand for residential and commercial development, builders are now developing lands that they previously rejected. An important effect of this trend is the loss of privately owned vacant lands that have provided open space for many years without a cost to the City.

The City contains a diverse network of public parks and public open space areas, including recreation fields, natural areas, informal open spaces and a trail system. The City is dedicated to providing quality open space and recreation facilities for its residents, and visitors. As part of an open space fund approved by a bond referendum in 2000, the City purchased eight parcels totaling nearly 44 acres and costing \$12.2 million between 2003 and 2008. These purchases increased the city's open space, park and field inventory by 24 percent.

In 2011 the City of Fairfax received the National Gold Medal Award by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The City was also a finalist for the Gold Medal in 2010. The Gold Medal Award honors communities throughout the United States that demonstrate excellence in long-range planning, resource

management, volunteerism, environmental stewardship, program development, professional development and agency recognition. Each agency is judged on its ability to address the needs of those it serves through the collective energies of citizens, staff and elected officials. The City of Fairfax is one of only four agencies having won this award in Virginia, since its inception in 1965. The City has also been recognized by the Virginia Recreation and Park Society (VRPS) with awards for Stafford Drive Park for Best New Facility and Draper Drive Park for Best Renovation in 2009.

## Parks and Recreation

### City Parks

The City's twenty-four parks, located on approximately 200 acres of land, fall into four distinct categories: regional parks, community parks, neighborhood parks and vest pocket parks (see Map PRO-1 and Table PRO-1). The 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan describes community parks as those designed to serve two or more neighborhoods and that provide facilities beyond capacity of neighborhood parks. Community parks provide close-to-home recreational facilities that require more space than can be accommodated at a neighborhood site. They provide a reasonable diversity of recreational opportunities for people of all ages including tot lots, a tennis complex, a swimming pool and lighted play fields. Open Space in community parks allow for picnic areas and walking and jogging trails, along with adequate parking and support facilities. Van Dyck Park, Daniels Run Park, and Providence Park are considered to be community parks.

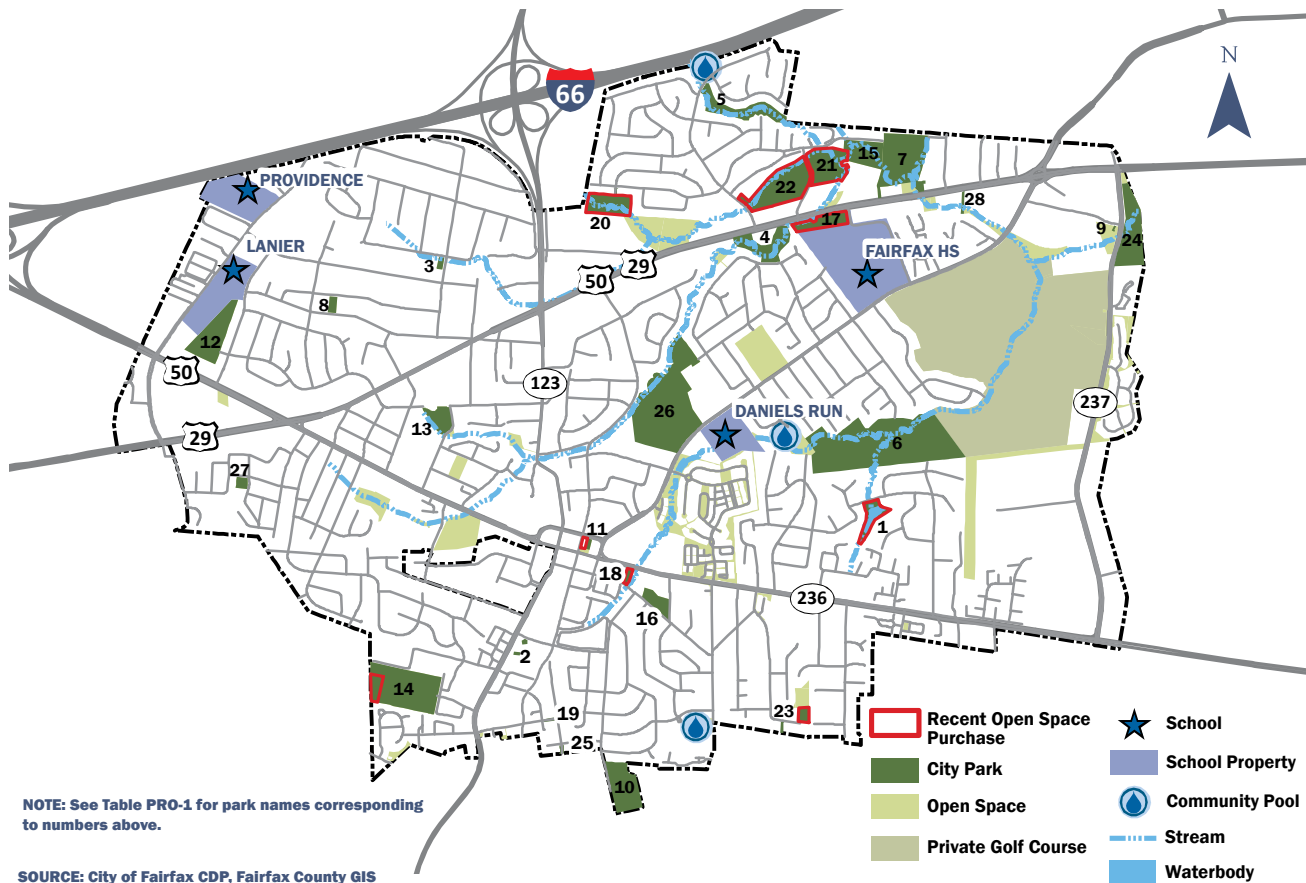
Neighborhood parks are described by the Virginia Outdoors Plan as those that are located within reasonable walking distance of the principal users. These parks provide play apparatuses (including an area designed for preschool children); open play fields; multipurpose courts and strategically located quiet areas with benches. Shiloh Street Park, Ted Greffe Park and Westmore Park are examples of neighborhood parks.

Table PRO-1

**Parks and Recreation Inventory**

Location		Size	Amenities
<b>Parks:</b>			
1	Ashby Pond Conservatory Site	3.7 acres	gazebo, picnic tables, natural pond
2	City Hall Complex		Veterans Amphitheater, Community Garden
3	Cobbdale Park	0.5 acres	playground
4	Country Club Hills Commons	7.5 acres	picnic shelter
5	Dale Lestina Park	7.7 acres	playground
6	Daniels Run Park	47.7 acres	trail, picnic shelter, playground
7	Draper Drive Park	17.3 acres	2 synthetic multi-purpose fields, playground, trail
8	Fairchester Woods Park	1 acre	basketball court, playground
9	Gateway Regional Park	10 acres	trail, pavilion
10	Green Acres Center	9.5 acres	gymnasium, playground, basketball court, 2 soccer fields and 1 practice area, little league field
11	Kitty Pozer Garden	0.4 acres	public garden
12	Kutner Park	10.2 acres	soccer field, tennis courts, volleyball court, trails, horseshoe pit, picnic pavilion, playground
13	Pat Rodio Park	4.1 acres	little league field, multipurpose field, playground
14	Providence Park	20.2 acres	soccer field, basketball court, trail, tennis court, picnic pavilion, playground
15	Ranger Road Park	18 acres	basketball court, trails, playground
16	Ratcliffe Park	6 acres	little league field, basketball court, multipurpose field, playground, picnic pavilion
17	Rebel Run Open Space	4.4 acres	undeveloped open space
18	Sager Trail (Cantone Easement)	0.33 acres	undeveloped open space, walking path
19	School Street Park	0.27 acres	walking path
20	Shiloh Street Park	6.6 acres	trail, playground
21	Stafford East Open Space	9.6 acres	undeveloped open space
22	Stafford Drive Park	14 acres	synthetic turf field, playground, trail
23	Ted Grefe Park	2.05 acres	undeveloped open space
24	Thaiss Memorial Park	11.4 acres	little league fields, playground, picnic shelter
25	University Drive Park	0.28 acres	walking path
26	Van Dyck Park	36 acres	basketball court, skate park, tennis courts with lights, volleyball sand court, multipurpose field, exercise trail, gazebo, picnic pavilions, playground
27	Westmore Park	1 acre	basketball court, practice tennis court, picnic pavilion, playground
28	Wilcoxon Park	0.5 acres	trail
<b>Schools:</b>			
	Fairfax High School	30.3 acres	baseball field, Softball field, Synthetic Multipurpose field, Tennis Courts, Track, Wrestling Room, Gymnasium
	Lanier Middle	12.3 acres	gymnasium, multipurpose field, track, wrestling room
	Providence Elementary	11 acres	baseball fields, gymnasium, softball field, playground
	Daniels Run Elementary	9 acres	gymnasium, softball diamond, 1 soccer field, 2 basketball courts

Map PRO-1  
**Parks, Recreation and Open Space**



Vest Pocket Parks, also known as mini-parks, are actually a subcategory of neighborhood parks. These parks often take advantage of odd-sized parcels of land created by modifications to structures, building demolitions or street relocations. Vest pocket park sites vary in size and serve neighborhoods by providing open space and play areas. Veterans Amphitheater, University Park and Kitty Pozer Garden behind the Ratcliffe-Allison House are examples of vest pocket parks in the City.

In an effort to offer more leisure opportunities that connect with the natural environment and build community for city residents, a community garden was created on the grounds of City Hall. In May 2011 a grand opening ceremony welcomed residents to sign up for ten foot by ten foot full sized plots or five foot by ten foot half sized plots within the fenced garden. The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for taking rental requests, assigning plots, enforcing rules of the community garden and maintaining the garden border fence and garden plot stakes.

## ***District and Regional Parks***

Although abundant throughout Fairfax County and the Northern Virginia area, there are no district parks by local park standards (see Table PRO-2) located in the City. District Parks, generally located on sites of at least 50 acres, are all-purpose facilities designed to accommodate a variety of day-use activities. In addition to the facilities usually found at community parks, district parks often provide opportunities for fishing, biking, picnicking and other natural open space oriented activities. Burke Lake Park, located on Ox Road (Route 123) south of the City, is an example a nearby district park.

Regional parks are usually associated with large natural resource features and are often provided through the cooperation of two or more jurisdictions. Typically located on sites of at least 100 acres, regional parks provide a wide variety of activity to afford recreational opportunities for all ages and interest groups. Gateway Regional Park, located

Table PRO-2  
**Park Area Standards**

Class	Acres/ 1,000	Service Radius	Minimum Size (Acres)	City Need	City Supply
Community Park	3	1 Mile	20	67.5 acres	127.5 acres
Neighborhood Park	3	2 Miles	5	67.5 acres	94.2 acres
Playground or Playlot	-	2 Miles	-		15.6 acres
District Park	4	5 - 7 Miles	50	90 acres	-- <sup>1</sup>
Regional Park	*	25 Miles	100		0.1 acre <sup>1</sup>
State Park	10	1 Hour	600	225 acres	-- <sup>1</sup>

Total Recommended Acres/1,000 Population: 22.5

\* Considered at a variable rate over and above local area standard.

<sup>1</sup> State, District and Regional Parks met through NVRPA and FCPA systems

Source: City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation, 2007 Virginia Outdoors Plan

near the intersection of Pickett Road and Old Pickett Road, serves as the nodal point for the City's trail system, the Cross County connector multi-use trail and the W & O D Trail. Maintained by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the park offers shelter, picnic tables, a water fountain and a display map of trails and local points of interest.

A cooperative agreement between the City and the County allows residents of both jurisdictions to use all parks and recreational facilities in either jurisdiction. The agreement allows City residents to use Fairfax County Park Authority parks at County rates and County residents to use the City's parks and programs at City rates. In addition, because the City is a contributing member of the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, City residents are entitled to use the extensive regional park facilities. Because of the City's central location, most of those facilities are easily accessible (within a one hour drive).

## Recreational Facilities

A \$5 million grant from Fairfax resident Geraldine Sherwood on behalf of herself and her late husband Stacy C. Sherwood enabled the City to construct its first purpose-built community center. Construction of this 12,000 square-foot facility adjacent to the current Police Station on Old Lee Highway was completed in 2011. The Stacy C. Sherwood Community Center has a focus on arts, classes and events with performance and rehearsal spaces, as well as rooms that are able to be rented for private or community functions.

Community centers – facilities used for social, cultural and recreation needs of individuals or groups – may have various focuses or serve different functions. In addition to the Sherwood center, other public facilities within the City serve community center needs. Some of these needs are met through the part-time use of facilities such as Fairfax High School, Lanier Middle School and Old Town Hall, as well as meeting spaces in City Hall, the City of Fairfax Regional Library, and Fire Station #3. However, use of Lanier, Fairfax High School and George Mason University is severely limited due to regular school use and extracurricular school activities. The Green Acres Center operates as an active recreation center as well as the City's Senior Center. The center serves over 1000 active senior members and offers numerous youth, adult and rental activities.

In 2007, the City of Fairfax worked with a consultant to conduct a Community Attitude and Interest Survey (CAIS)



Athletic Field at Stafford Drive Park

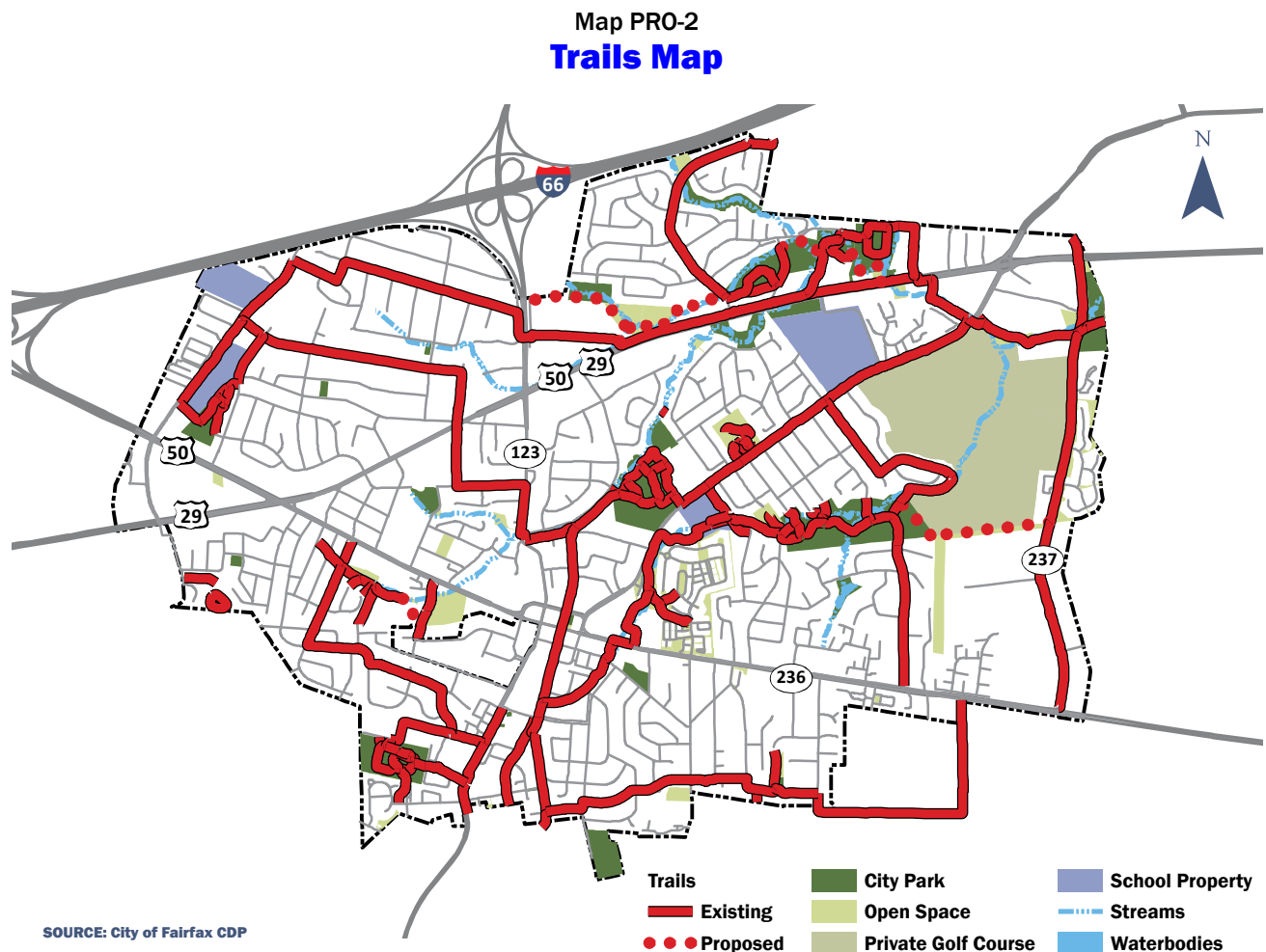
in order to establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services. Of primary interest from the CAIS results were small community parks, paved walking and biking trails, indoor recreation and historical sites and museums. The City has partially met these needs through the acquisition of Historic Blenheim and 44 acres of parkland. To accommodate the needs of the year-round sports leagues which serve 6,000 children regionally, the City invested funds to build two tennis courts at Providence Park, two synthetic turf fields at Draper Drive Park and one at Stafford Drive Park and converted two natural turf fields at Providence Elementary into the first 375-foot outfield baseball field with lighting in the City. In addition to the existing private community pool facilities in the City (see Map PRO-1), City residents also have access to Fairfax County's Oak Marr RECenter in Oakton and George Mason's Aquatic and Fitness Center.

The City has taken an active role in making recreation accessible to everyone. Stafford Drive Park, completed

in 2008, is the first in the City to feature a barrier-free playground. Barrier-free playgrounds offer a "sensory-rich" atmosphere designed to provide access to disabled or mobility-impaired children, parents, grandparents, and their family members while allowing free navigation and interaction in a park setting. It requires at least 70% of play activities to serve children with physical disabilities and address the children's intellectual, physical, emotional and social needs. The Draper Drive Park renovations also resulted in accessibility enhancements.

## Trails

The majority of the trails in the City are multipurpose recreational trails serving the needs of pedestrians, joggers and bicyclists. The City's bikeways consist of various multipurpose trails, paved trails, sidewalks and shared roadways (see Map PRO-2). Trails serve multiple purposes; not just recreation, but also as a transportation route that can serve as an alternative to the City's roadways.





In April 2011 the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board (PRAB) established a Trails Sub-Committee to remain active for a minimum of three years with the purpose of leading the development of a comprehensive plan to enhance the City's current trail system and recommend new trails and trail extensions. The sub-committee has recently begun an inventory of existing trails in the City, documenting existing conditions including width, surface type, incline and maintenance issues noticed on the trails. Other recent topics of discussion include the signage and designation of the George Snyder Trail and coordination with the Mason to Metro Study.

## Park Standards

Based on the Virginia Outdoors Plan area standards, the supply of City parkland, as well as the distribution and range of park types, is more than adequate to meet the needs of City residents. Although there appears to be adequate park acreage to serve City residents, there may be a need for additional recreational facilities within those areas based on National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) and Commonwealth of Virginia standards and usage data. The current and projected recreational facilities surplus or deficit is shown in Table PRO-3. These standards should be further

Table PRO-3

### Recreation Standards

Activity and Type of Facility		Standard Units/ Population	City Need	City Supply	Surplus (Deficit)
Archery (Range)		1 per 50,000	–	–	– <sup>1</sup>
Baseball (Diamond)		1 per 6,000	4	15	11
Basketball (Court)		1 per 5,000	4.5	23	18.5
Community Center		1 per 25,000	1	2	1
Firearms (Shooting Range)		1 per 50,000	–	–	–
Football (Field)		1 per 10,000	2.3	2	–
Golf		9 holes per 25,000	9 holes	0 <sup>2</sup>	9 holes
Hiking and Jogging Trails		2 miles per 1,000	45 miles	22.1 miles	(22.9 miles)
Hockey	Field	1 per 25,000	1	1	–
	Ice Rink	1 per 30, 000	1	1 <sup>3</sup>	–
Horseshoes (Lanes)		1 per 10,000	2.3	1	(1.3)
Lacrosse (Field)		1 per 25,000	1	1	–
Outdoor Theatre		1 per 20,000	1	1	–
Racquetball		1 per 20,000	1	3	2
Soccer		1 per 5,000	10	7.5	(2.5)
Softball		1 per 3,000	7.5	2.5	(5.5)
Skateboard Park		1 per 25,000	1	1	–
Swimming Pool	25 meters (Jr. Olympic)	1 per 10,000	2	3 semi-private	1
	50 meters (Olympic)	1 per 20,000	1	0	(1)
Tennis (court)		1 per 2,000	11	12	1
Track (Quarter-mile)		1 per 20,000	1	1	–
Volleyball		1 per 1,000	22.5	2 outdoor	(21)

<sup>1</sup> Archery Ranges are accessible through Fairfax County system

<sup>2</sup> 18 holes in private course

<sup>3</sup> Privately-run, for profit facility open to the public

reviewed in context of the City's needs and the availability of County recreational facilities for use by City residents.

The development of a strategic master plan has been proposed for future planning of the City's parks and trails through extensive community input related to passive and active needs for parks and recreation services, amenities, trails and facilities. This five year strategic plan would identify key focus areas for staff, PRAB and City Council to assist with decisions for project development and funding integrated with the City's comprehensive plan. The plan could also include discussion regarding including native species planting requirements for all parks and open space, especially along stream segments that run through these public lands.

The City of Fairfax has been a member of Tree City USA for 24 years, a program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in cooperation with the USDA Forest Service. The Tree City USA program provides direction, technical assistance, public attention, and national recognition for urban and community forestry programs. Preference is sometimes given to Tree City USA communities over other communities when allocations of grant money are made for trees or forestry programs. Over 300 trees were planted at Stafford Drive and Draper Drive Parks.

Green and sustainability initiatives have been a key focus of the City's renovations at Stafford Drive and Draper Drive parks. Both spaces—a total of nearly 40 acres—feature innovative field technology, energy-conservative lighting, bio-retention rain gardens, protected woodland, open space, and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) constructed facilities that highlight the preservation of the City's natural resources.

## Open Space

The term "open space" has different meanings to different people. Most of these meanings have in common the idea of lands that have not been intensively developed with structures. Common examples include forestlands, farmlands and open parklands. While most people consider these lands to be natural areas, many lands that today serve as open space have been subject to deforestation, earthwork grading and replanting at some point in the past. Some of these lands have a small portion of their surfaces covered with buildings such as barns or picnic shelters while serving an overall open space function. While man-made intrusions such as ball fields and trails can occur on open space lands, most people believe that development more intensive than park facilities invalidates the land's status as open space.

Important to open space planning is the distinction between lands that have been formally designated as open space through official acts and lands that provide the benefits of open space despite having no guarantees that the open nature will be retained on a permanent basis. The development of previously open lands often upsets and confuses nearby residents who were unaware that the lands were privately held and eligible for development.

A purpose of open space planning and funding the purchase of lands for open space is to assure sufficient open space on a continuing basis by converting some privately held open lands into lands that are protected from development. Another benefit of open space acquisition is the reduction of the amount of impervious cover which contributes to the degradation of water resources. The developed paved areas increase the volume of surface runoff and prevent infiltration of rainfall into the soil surface. By preserving more natural areas for infiltration, the cost of storm water management is reduced by concentrating runoff in one area and reducing runoff volumes. In addition to volume control, the concentrated runoff in open areas filters the pollutants before reaching our water resources.

## *Designated Open Space*

In addition to the recognition of traditional recreation-oriented uses of parks, citizen groups have placed considerable emphasis on both natural area preservation and undesignated open space. Reflecting this preference, both Daniels Run Park and Ashby Pond Conservancy are used for the purposes of preservation and/or conservation. These parks remain in their natural state, and serve as undeveloped habitat space as well as watershed buffer space. Other larger properties have likewise been acquired as undesignated open space, such as the 4½-acre Rebel Run Park, which was acquired in 2003. In total, the City has 44 acres set aside for open space/preservation.

## *Rights-of-way & Stub-streets*

The use of rights-of-way for their open space value became a defined community preference in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The Community Appearance Committee (CAC) studied the many dead-end/stub streets in the City of Fairfax with the intent to blend these areas into the community, thus improving appearance and reducing maintenance. In addition to increasing the amount of open space in the City, the rehabilitation of these areas also provide opportunities to reduce impervious area and install low impact development measures to help capture and treat stormwater. Typically these stubs exist because original plans for subdivisions were

never completed or planned connections to adjacent parcels were abandoned in future developments of neighboring projects, leaving roads that led to nowhere. These dead-end areas often become areas for dumping trash or parking vehicles.

The CAC's 1999 survey found 30 candidates for renovation. The first renovation was completed in 2002 on Shiloh Street in the Mosby Woods subdivision. The second project was the east end of Ranger Road in the Cambridge Station neighborhood, completed in the fall of 2002. Between 2003 and 2005 four more stubs were renovated; St. Andrews Drive, Estel Road, Spring Lake Terrace and Dale Drive. The FY 2011 Capital Improvements Plan provides funds to be used to pay for concrete, asphalt, plant material, trees, etc. for Stanton Drive/Beaumont Street in 2012 and Ranger Road in 2013. A current action regarding a right-of-way being transformed into a park amenity is the former connection of School Street to University Drive, which was closed to traffic when George Mason Boulevard was completed in 2009; the site is currently planned for a mini-park.

## Existing Inventory and Priority Needs

The City has a large park and open space system that is augmented by public school lands, homeowners' association properties, and other privately held open spaces. Combined, these spaces serve to provide recreational areas for citizens and area residents, protect neighborhoods from incompatible uses, and preserve the City's most sensitive natural features. Additional purchases of open space should further these ends, providing additional benefit to the community.

The former Weight Watchers site, which was purchased as part of the recent open space acquisitions, has been used as a gravel parking lot since the demolition of the building. Concepts for the entire block, referred to as George Mason Square, have been prepared and are under consideration. The proposed concept shows an expansion of the Kitty Pozer Garden including a gazebo, water features and an outdoor theater area with stepped seating.

One further item for future facility planning is the property located at 9999 Main St. This property, consisting of a 1920s-era house and roughly 3 acres of land, has been donated to the City for use as a park through a retained life estate – whereby the property may continue to be occupied for the current residents' lifetimes. When the City realizes full use of the property, the site is to be known as Katherine Barker Park. The City should undertake an initial assessment of potential uses for both the property and the existing structure in order to ensure a smooth transition to eventual City control.

## Land Acquisition

In 2001 the Open Space Advisory Committee provided a report to City Council to assist in the selection process of how best to use the funds collected for open space acquisition. Although the report is now ten years old, many of the goals and objective remain relevant. Using a point-based ranking system, the committee ranked parcels in priority order based on a set of common goals at which the committee arrived through consensus-building discussions. These same criteria should be reviewed and used to assess all parcels in the City to identify those that should be considered for acquisition if the opportunity and funding arises.

The Committee's report also noted that the use of grants, donations, easements and other means of funding be used in conjunction with funds raised for purchasing parcels. The City should continue to research and pursue grant opportunities and proffers for future open space acquisition. City staff and officials should be cautious to weigh the benefits of a land purchase as either benefiting the entire City or satisfying the residents of an underserved area. Numerous stakeholder groups exist that will be affected by open space acquisitions. Among the groups that have a vested interest in the acquisition of open space are sports leagues, neighborhoods, environmental groups and historic preservation advocates. All of these groups have valid reasons to promote particular open space acquisition policies. While it is impossible to fully meet the needs of each of these groups, it is possible to strategically select parcels that serve to promote the goals of each group and the City as a whole.

## Future Land Use Designations

The Land Use Plan describes the three main categories of Future Land Use for designation as open space. The three categories are Open Space—Recreation, Open Space—Conservation, and Open Space—Preservation. The primary differences among these categories are the purposes for open space designation. The Recreation category includes all lands used primarily for active recreation. The Conservation category includes primarily lands used for visual buffering and passive recreation. The Preservation category is reserved for lands that the City plans to keep—to the extent possible—in a natural state. These categories cover lands that both are currently in open space use as well as those lands that are desired for addition to the City's open space inventory. The characteristics of these designations can be seen in the Land Use chapter. The locations of lands designated for these uses can be seen in Future Land Use Map in the Land Use chapter.



# Parks, Recreation and Open Space— Goal, Objectives & Strategies

*Goal: Ensure, on a continuing basis, the provision of adequate open space for health, recreation, and environmental purposes.*

*Objective PRO-1 Acquire lands, development rights, or conservation easements as necessary to ensure adequate locations to support recreational activities.*

## Strategies

**PRO-1.1 Identify lands based on input received in the Open Space Citizens' Advisory Committee Report, City organizations and citizen input that would enhance the parks and trails system.**

The Open Space Citizens' Advisory Committee provided in its report a priority ranking list and correspondence from boards, commissions, civic associations and City residents. The City should consult the report as opportunities arise to incorporate additional property into the parks and trails system.

**PRO-1.2 Assure the provision of lands for each of the types of open space, focusing on creating the maximum benefit to City residents.**

Among the possible intended uses for open space are active recreation, public spaces, buffers between residential neighborhoods and adjacent incompatible uses, and natural area preservation. While all of these objectives are valid uses of open space funding, care should be taken to ensure that neither one of these goals, nor any of the groups that advances a particular goal, dominates the open space acquisition process.

**PRO-1.3 Utilize outside funding, donations and grants to supplement and maximize open space funds.**

The Open Space Citizens' Advisory Committee Report gave several examples of additional funding resources. The City should review these resources and research for new opportunities to assist in large purchases.

**PRO-1.4 Wherever appropriate, obtain conservation easements and similar instruments on lands that the City will not actively utilize.**

The use of conservation easements can bring desired lands into official open space status without requiring the City to buy the properties outright. Extensive use of conservation easements should save on the costs of maintaining these lands, most of which would be kept in their natural state.

*Objective PRO-2 Obtain or otherwise gain designation of small parcels for use as vest pocket parks as public gathering spaces, open space buffers or neighborhood passive recreation areas.*

## Strategies

**PRO-2.1 Wherever appropriate, convert excess rights-of-way and other City-owned properties to open space.**

The City has long held rights-of-way, buffer strips and other vacant lands for their open space value on an informal basis. The City should continue to study which of these lands are suitable to be formally designated as open space.

**PRO-2.2 Facilitate the creation of vest pocket parks in areas of high pedestrian traffic or visual interest.**

One manner of enhancing the City's mixed-use areas, particularly Old Town and the three major centers along the Fairfax Boulevard corridor, is to create vest-pocket parks. These parks can serve two major functions: adding green space to relieve the congesting effects of intensive development and providing places for people to relax or visit near areas of employment or shopping. When possible, the City should encourage the inclusion of vest pocket parks during the processes of reviewing plans involving the redevelopment of focal areas within the City.

*Objective PRO-3 Provide and maintain excellent facilities and services to accommodate present and future needs.*

### **Strategies**

#### **PRO-3.1 Upgrade and maintain City parks, ball fields, and other recreational facilities.**

City-owned recreational facilities and the City's recreational programs are important components of quality of life. Their enhancement and protection are vital for maintaining this quality of life for future generations. To avoid deterioration of these facilities, the City should continue to explore cost recovery methods to offset the operating costs of facilities and programs and other financing alternatives for facility replacement at the end of its useful life. Park projects should focus on maintaining current park assets, walking and biking trails, and fitness amenities.

#### **PRO-3.2 Identify park properties that may benefit from expansion of active or passive facilities or equipment.**

Park needs and uses change over time, and there may be park properties in the City that can benefit from new equipment and types of uses. Properties that may fit into this category include Ratcliffe Park and Daniels Run Park, and facilities include a sprayground (such as at Van Dyck Park), and amenities such as a dog park.

#### **PRO-3.3 Provide a wide variety of recreational facilities and programs for all City residents.**

Park facilities meet or surpass most state and national standards for a City of this size. Updating the community needs assessment (revising the Parks and Recreation Attitudes and Interest Survey every five years), identifying additional existing options to meet those needs, and building community support for new facilities are the next steps in assuring that recreational needs of the City residents are met.

#### **PRO-3.4 Prioritize the renovation and expansion of the Green Acres Center.**

Although the Sherwood Community Center will fulfill many of the City's cultural arts needs, the Green Acres Center will remain an active community center, serving various segments of the City's population from young children to seniors. The facility, a former elementary school built in 1961, needs renovations both to ensure continued operability, modern accessibility, and to make the facility better suited to the needs of a community center. The center should be renovated and expanded into a diverse recreation center, allow-

ing for and expansion of the senior center, for many recreational activities, and a strong focus on fitness.

#### **PRO-3.5 Plan for uses at the future Katherine Barker Park.**

This property has been donated to the City for use as a future park, but is still occupied by the donors through a life estate. The City should begin to examine specific potential uses.

#### **PRO-3.6 Reduce accessibility barriers and improve restroom facilities at parks.**

Park athletic facilities, including rentable pavilion areas should be made accessible as per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), playgrounds should be made barrier free, and permanent restrooms should be installed at heavily-used parks. Additionally, any future park facilities or any future renovations of park facilities should be developed with accessibility for the disabled population in mind. Consideration should also be given to the development of a playground, such as Hadley's Playground in Potomac, MD., or Clemjontri Park in McLean, designed specifically for children with disabilities.

*Objective PRO-4 Provide amenities and activities to attract workers, visitors and residents.*

### **Strategies**

#### **PRO-4.1 Incorporate facilities such as trails and small parks or open space areas within and adjacent to residential and commercial developments.**

Through the rezoning and special permit processes, the City should seek proffers to enhance connectivity through local trails and parks and to provide open space areas throughout the City. Where feasible, those proffers may also include maintenance and replacement funds when trail and park facilities are being proffered.

#### **PRO-4.2 Improve the usability of the City's trail system by focusing on trail awareness, expansion and connectivity.**

A well-defined, off-road trail system can not only provide important recreation outlets for walking and bicycling but also provide a means to encourage non-vehicle transportation through the community. The City trails map should be regularly updated to include recent improvements and recommended future improvements, particularly regarding trail connectivity. Special focus should be on connecting existing

trails in order to create better linkages between City neighborhoods and facilities. The City should seek funding through state and federal grants and cooperate with non-profit organizations to implement improvements to the system. Additionally, the City should continue to cooperate with and support the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, and work with the Authority to improve the city trail connection with the County Connector Trail.